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ABSTRACT

In the late 1980s, three steps were added to the incremental pay scale for teachers in all Australian state and territory education authorities. The original intent of this Advanced Skills Teacher (AST) concept was to provide an alternative career path for teachers wishing to remain primarily in a teaching role, a career path comparable in status to that enjoyed by administrators. This paper describes what happened to the AST reform in practice, particularly how closely implementation adhered to the original concept; identifies factors that impeded progress and conditions necessary to successfully translate the original concept into practice; and calculates whether the initiative has run its course and whether it can be incorporated within proposed new career structures. This brief survey discovered that AST is almost universally regarded as a disappointment, an opportunity lost. Among the factors that limited the success of the AST in practice are: (1) lack of rigorous standards and evaluation procedures; (2) lack of commitment to funding; (3) its use as a vehicle for achieving too many different agendas; (4) absence of guardianship of the idea or capacity to ensure its integrity; (5) persistence of old assumptions regarding career development; and (6) the concept's vulnerability to political influences. Recommendations include establishing national professional bodies responsible for developing standards and assessments, and reassing the idea of the "alternative career path." (Contains 33 references.) (MAH)

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REFORMING TEACHERS' PAY SYSTEMS:

THE ADVANCED SKILLS TEACHER IN AUSTRALIA

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REFORMING TEACHER PAY SYSTEMS: THE ADVANCED SKILLS TEACHER IN AUSTRALIA

Lawrence Ingvarson and Rod Chadbourne

Introduction

This paper reviews the introduction of a new classification in the career structure for Australia teachers - the Advanced Skills Teacher (AST). As a result of industrial negotiations at a national level during the late 1980s, three further steps (AST 1-3) were to be added to the existing incremental pay scale for teachers in all state and territory education authorities, whether Public, Catholic or Independent. The original intention of the AST concept was to provide an alternative career path for teachers who wished to remain mainly in a teaching role - a career path comparable in status to that enjoyed by administrators (the salary of an AST 3 was to be equivalent to that for a deputy principal).

The purpose of this paper is to:

- construct an overall picture of what happened to the AST reform in practice across Australia, particularly the extent to which the original concept has been adhered to;
- identify factors that impeded progress and conditions necessary for the successful translation of the original AST concept into practice;
- calculate whether the AST initiative has run its course, whether events have overtaken it, and whether the 'career development model' can be incorporated within proposed new career structures and if so what must be done to ensure that it succeeds.

The findings in this study point to a dilemma for those who might attempt to introduce 'professional' career paths for teachers in the future. Fundamental improvements to teachers' pay systems and career structures undoubtedly depend on initiatives within the industrial relations arena. However, this arena proved to be an unsuitable context in which to develop the kind of teaching standards and performance assessments that are essential for career paths based on quality of practice. This study indicates that these tasks require instead the creation of stable, national, expert professional bodies that embrace all stakeholders in on-going deliberation about standards and conduct of assessments.

Sources

This paper makes use of a number of studies on the AST published over the past five years. Data for this study also came from information in official guidelines and reports about AST procedures developed by employer organisation and teacher unions, transcripts of Industrial Commission hearings, union archives, and research papers and magazine articles produced by school practitioners. In addition we interviewed teacher union and education department officers once more in every Australian state and territory during November-December 1995. In this paper our review is limited to the implementation of AST in the public sector in all states and territories.

WHY LOOK AT THE AST?

In principle, the AST classification represented a shift from a career ladder model to a career development model for teacher compensation, as described by Bacharach, Conley & Shedd (1990). In Lawler's (1990) terms, it was to be a pay system based on professional knowledge and skill, not the position occupied in an administrative hierarchy. In Australian terms, it was a venture into the unknown - a shift from the traditional model of "merit" (competitive) selection for advertised positions to "criterion" based assessment of current performance. The aim of the AST reform was to reward teachers for demonstrable improvements in the quality of their practice and to provide additional opportunities for them to take up leadership roles in relation to curriculum and staff development. Such an offer, it was hoped, would keep good teachers in the classroom, provide all teachers with an incentive to continue their professional development, and attract higher calibre recruits to the profession. As conceived, therefore, the AST reform could not be cost neutral.

In a sense Australia attempted to implement a version of the career development model on a massive scale. The introduction of the AST represented a daunting teacher evaluation exercise for employers and unions as there were over 100,000 teachers who were eligible to apply. For example, when the AST was introduced in the state of Victoria in 1991 (each state and territory in Australia is a single school 'district' in US terms, and each state government is the employer of 70-75% of schoolteachers), over 19000 (nearly 50%) teachers had been at the top of salary scale for many years and were therefore 'eligible' to apply for AST 1 status. Because of teacher demographics in Australia, the proportions were similar across all employing authorities as the average age of teachers was well over forty. Again, in Victoria, about 67% (13000) of the eligible teachers applied for AST status in the first year it was offered. As the task of

carrying out the selection was devolved to school-based assessment panels, schools faced the task of evaluating as many as half their teaching staff, usually over a period of a few weeks. The pressure on unions and school systems to deliver wage rises quickly through the AST reform was considerable and therein lay some threats to the integrity of the AST.

There have been numerous attempts in the US to reform pay systems and to redesign teachers' work (Protsik, 1995; Smylie, 1994), but reviews of research on their implementation (Murnane & Cohen, 1986; Rosenholtz, 1986) indicate that few are well received by teachers or benefit student learning. Australia has experienced relatively few attempts to reform the single salary schedule, although there has been a consensus for many years in Australia, both within the education community (Department of Employment, Education and Training, 1988), and across business and industry sectors, that the careerless character of school teaching is a major barrier to efforts to lift the quality of education (Business Council of Australia, 1991; Federation of Australian Scientific and Technological Societies, 1995).

Merit pay schemes have been rare in Australia. Career ladders in the form of 'positions of responsibility', such as departmental chairs, year level, curriculum and staff development coordination, have been part of the traditional career path toward senior administrative jobs. Whether these positions have been permanent ('classified') or short-term (extra payments for extra duties) has varied across school systems and according to the nature of the job.

From a US view, what may make the AST unusual is that the window of opportunity to improve the career structure for *all* teachers was provided by a (now superseded) change in Australia's centralised wage fixing principles known as "Award Restructuring". The AST was not an outcome of managerial prerogative or negotiations at the local education authority level. It was driven by a search for new bases for industrial bargaining and wage fixing at the national level by the Federal Government, union and industry leaders that would better serve the economic interests of the country. This raises the question , "how well has the industrial route and process served the long standing need to provide a better career structure for teachers?"

ORIGINS OF THE ADVANCED SKILLS TEACHER CONCEPT

The concept of providing teachers with a career path in classroom teaching, as distinct from school management, has existed in the minds of some Australian educators for decades. Until 1987 attempts to put this concept into practice made little impact. The

Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory had introduced a career path in the form of a Master Teacher scheme in the early 1980s but few other Australian states followed suit. During the 1987/88 round of salary negotiations, however, the Australian Teachers Union took an historic decision to construct a National Framework for promoting professional equity across Australia (Burrow and Gilmore, 1993). One element of this framework was a new classification called the Advanced Skills Teacher.[1]

A year later the Australian Schools Commission (ASC)[2] (September 1988) published a report which argued that a national effort to improve teacher development should include the creation of new career structures in teaching (Bluer 1993). The following year the Australian Council of Trade Unions (1989) took up the cause by including the AST classification in its blueprint for restructuring industrial awards in line with the newly formulated 'structural efficiency principle'. Then, in 1990, the Schools Council (which replaced the ASC) threw its support behind the AST concept, arguing that "the main justification for the introduction of this classification is to encourage teachers of high quality to continue their work in the classroom" (1990, p.120).

Award Restructuring

In Australia, industrial 'awards' are statutory, legally enforceable documents. They can specify pay rates, job classifications, hours of work, holiday and sick leave entitlements and, in some cases, safety standards, staffing levels and dispute settlement procedures. Awards are decisions made by Federal and State Industrial Relations Commissions, which have conciliation and arbitration (umpire) powers in disputes.

Like most countries in the 1980's, Australian governments were making a concerted effort to tackle the problem of how to make the nation's economy more internationally competitive. The existing structure of many of Australia's industry-based awards was identified as an impediment to developing the kind of highly competent, flexible, multi-skilled, committed workforce required at the workplace or individual 'enterprise' level. Until the early 1980s, salary increases were determined centrally and granted almost automatically on the basis of increases in the Consumer Price Index. Thereafter, governments, unions and industry leaders moved increasingly to wage fixing principles based on various conceptions of productivity or, more accurately, efficiency.

Award Restructuring entailed reviewing existing pay classifications to establish the type of skill-related career paths that encourage workers to participate in continuing 'skill formation' (Curtain 1991; Morris 1989). It was designed to achieve two things: improve the productivity of the enterprise and increase rewards to the workforce. It offered

workers better wages and conditions in return for union cooperation in a fundamental review of industrial award, which gave effect to the Structural Efficiency Principle (SEP). This principle emphasised the need for better career paths and a "more highly skilled and flexible labour force to assist in structural adjustment and to provide workers with access to more varied, fulfilling and better paid jobs" (Morris, 1989, p.3).

THE AST CONCEPT: POLICY AND PRACTICE

It was not immediately clear what the SEP meant for teaching, but the Australian Teachers Union (later the Australian Education Union or AEU) saw it as an opportunity to introduce the AST concept, which, according to Bluer (1993), had four dimensions:

- a motivation/incentive/reward dimension for experienced teachers at or near the top of the (incremental) salary scale
- a relationship/leadership dimension between ASTs and other teachers
- a work reorganisation dimension led by ASTs
- an on-the-job training dimension using ASTs

Historically, the AST initiative emanated from a unique coming together of all teacher unions throughout Australia to make a joint submission to the Industrial Relations Commission. Potentially, it constituted one of the most progressive educational reforms ever adopted in Australia. It entailed the explicit use of the industrial relations arena as a vehicle for workplace reform (Bluer and Carmichael, 1991; Durbridge, 1991). Even further, claimed some observers, it signalled a definite shift, in terms of control over the policy agenda on the quality of teaching, to the unions (Angus, 1991). Every employer and the recognised union was required by a 1988 decision of Australian Industrial (Relations) Commission to introduce the AST classification. Salary improvements were to be contingent on evidence that the industrial parties were reviewing the "awards" that covered working conditions.

All this development during 1987-90 was reinforced and invigorated by work on the AST concept by state teacher unions and education departments (government and non government), which sometimes paralleled and sometimes took place in conjunction with the efforts being made at the national level. In the Australian Capital Territory, for example, the agreement between the employer and the union relating to the AST classification stated:

> The parties agree in principle to the AST concept as a means of providing an alternative career path for classroom teachers to that of an increasing administrative role and as a means of reducing the movement of classroom

teachers to other occupations.

The development and implementation of the AST concept had now shifted to the industrial arena, with its own time scales and rapidly shifting priorities. It became clearer in retrospect, that, because of this shift, "the opportunity for a more careful, professional development of the concept, before we launched into implementation, was lost" (Lee, 1994).

There were few clear guidelines about how the AST was to be implemented. States have constitutional responsibility for education and guard their rights assiduously, particularly when decisions at a national level may have budget implications. In principle, the AST concept could not be cost neutral, so who was going to pay? There were growing tensions associated with the implementation of the AST at the state level, particularly over eligibility, quotas, tenure and portability of the classification between schools.

The Commonwealth Government made its view of the AST concept clear in a letter to the Australian Industrial Relations Commission in 1991. A key feature of the principles in the list below is the distinction made between AST 1 and AST 2 & 3. AST 1 was extra pay for better work, but AST 2 & 3 became defined as "work related tasks" or positions. The career path became a job ladder. The principles were adopted in the main by State Ministers of Education, except for the principle that AST positions should not be substituted for other existing promotions positions. The principles included:

- AST classifications are separate and distinct from the incremental salary scale
- three distinct steps or stages, AST-1, AST-2, and AST-3 beyond the top of the incremental salary scale, with no automatic movement between them.
- the primary duty of an AST is classroom teaching
- teachers at levels above AST 1 are outstanding classroom practitioners with a normal teaching load with appropriate discounting not normally exceeding 20% for system and other teaching duties.
- levels above AST 1 are positions with work related tasks to meet the need of each system
- AST positions should not be substituted for other existing promotions positions
- AST positions should be held for fixed periods with the opportunity for extension or renewal. There should be regular performance appraisals for each level
- rewards should be granted for demonstrating superior teaching skills in the classroom, not undertaking additional managerial duties outside the classroom
- a set of nationally consistent selection criteria should be set by the profession and

reflecting high standards of pedagogical expertise

- advancement to the AST classification should not be constrained by arbitrary quotas, but there should be sufficiently tight eligibility requirements and hard and rigorous selection criteria to ensure that the credibility of the classification is not compromised.
- it is appropriate for employers to limit access to AST classification to areas where the skills are required, and in accordance with established industrial principles, payment should be dependent not only on the acquisition of higher skills but on the requirement to exercise those skills
- successful applicants should make their advanced skill available to the school in a classroom oriented educational leadership capacity (eg. modelling and mentoring)
- a carefully constituted and rigorous selection process, which includes peer review and collegial appraisal should be established.

The federal government wanted the different states and territories to establish a degree of commonality within their AST positions. In particular, it wanted adherence to the original concept, as outlined above. This meant common structures (including salaries compatible with national benchmarks), common selection criteria, a common selection process, and a common expectation that ASTs would take responsibility for helping develop the schools' PD program, mentoring junior staff, and exercising curriculum leadership.

All states and territories have implemented AST-1 and some have implemented AST 2 and 3. However, the degree of commonality among the states and their adherence to the principles underlying the original concept of the AST has not been as high as the Federal Government had wished. It has become clear that in a number of important ways, the implementation of the AST classification has gone off the track, so much so that some states are in the process of replacing it with a new career path in teaching.

The introduction of the AST during the period from 1989-94 was accompanied by some of the worst industrial disputation seen in education for more than twenty years. The disputation, and the difficulties encountered in implementation, stemmed not so much from the concept of the Advanced Skills Teacher itself as from its being coupled to a major change in national wage-fixing principles - productivity bargaining (interpreted as cost neutral bargaining) - and the fight for a common national 'benchmark' salary for all Australian teachers ('equal pay for equal work'). In hindsight, these new principles were incompatible with the emphasis on lifting quality inherent in the AST.

Teacher union leaders, who claimed their members had lost up to 15% in real wages from 1983 to 1987, saw AST 1 as an opportunity to deliver a pay rise to their members.

However, it was also a period of economic recession and cutbacks in public spending, especially after 1987. School systems were cutting teacher numbers severely at the same time as they were devolving more management responsibilities to schools. As the President of the Australian Teachers Union put it, "There could have been few worse environments ... in which to introduce (the AST)" (Burrow, 1996)

The history of industrial relations in this period is well documented by several of the main union and employer leaders involved (Riley, 1991; Gaffney & Crowther, 1993; Seddon, 1996).

THE ADVANCED SKILL TEACHER IN PRACTICE

A brief summary of what happened across the eight states is provided here. While the AST concept was developed nationally, it was implemented locally. Selection of applicants for AST was carried out by school-based panels following procedural guidelines laid down by employer-union negotiation at the state level. The following abbreviations are used for each state: NSW (New South Wales), SA (South Australia), WA (Western Australia), ACT (Australian Capital Territory), NT (Northern Territory), Qld (Queensland) and Tas (Tasmania).

Number of Levels and Salary Allowances

By 1994, all states had implemented the first step on the career path, AST-1, but only Victoria, the Northern Territory and Tasmania had introduced AST 2 and 3. The NT set AST 1, 2, and 3 fully in place. Victoria planned to introduce AST 2 and 3 in two phases during 1993-4. The first phase went ahead as planned but not the second. Consequently only half the number of AST 2 and 3 positions were filled.

The salary allowance for AST-1 was fairly uniform across the country. It ranged from $1200 - $1330 on top of salary scale. AST 2s tended to receive an allowance of roughly $2400 and AST 3s an allowance of $3600. These allowances were less than originally projected.

Selection Criteria

Despite a few differences in the number of selection criteria, the states developed a reasonably uniform set of professional standards for entry to AST-1 positions. Employers and unions developed the criteria together. These criteria were general rather than subject-specific or student-age-grade-specific. The following five criteria headings for AST 1-3 agreed on for the Victorian state school system are similar to those for most

states:

A. Demonstrated skills in excellent classroom teaching practice which foster improved learning outcomes for all students;

B. Ability to develop positive relationships with students which engender positive attitudes to learning, and effective communication skills when collaborating with parents and teachers;

C. Ability to successfully implement and evaluate curriculum initiatives in line with key educational policy and ideas;

D. Ability to contribute with other members of the school community to the identification of local classroom and professional development needs, and to the development and implementation of programs to meet those needs;

E. Ability to implement social justice strategies including equal opportunity and equal employment opportunity within schools.

Each criterion was expanded on briefly. For example, to meet criterion A applicants had to demonstrate the following skills and practices:

- consistent use of a range of effective teaching strategies appropriate to year levels and subjects taught:
- consistent use of a range of assessment methods, evaluation strategies and reporting practices;
- use of effective classroom management strategies which contribute to the establishment of an effective learning environment;
- identifying differences in the way students learn and providing assistance to students that take account of these differences.

This is as far as the development of standards went. These criteria identified the domains of teachers' work that selection panels were expected to examine but they did not indicate what constituted accomplished practice. No work was done on *setting* standards or developing scoring rubrics as with the NBPTS Assessment Development Labs. In the event the panels found the criteria difficult to use as a basis for making judgements about the quality or standard of an applicants' work. Given that no official AST standards were set, it was difficult to know what yardsticks the panels used to

make final selections and rankings.

The generic nature of the selection criteria placed the credibility of the AST in jeopardy. They were too broad for identifying advanced knowledge and skill. Also, they gave teachers little to aim for, little indication of what they must get better at, and little basis for a sense of achievement at having reached another milestone in their teaching career.

The unsatisfactory nature of the criteria can be attributed partly to the fact that they were not based on research or wide consultation across the profession. They were developed quickly by the employers and unions to meet the deadlines set for school-based assessment panels to complete their selections that year.

What was the difference between AST 1, 2 and 3? The Victorian criteria conceived of a widening leadership contribution to curriculum and teaching innovation, evaluation and professional development at departmental and whole school levels. There were more criteria to meet; 'advanced' skill here meant a wider repertoire of skills. Second, AST 2s and 3s were expected to be able to demonstrate these extra skills in a leadership capacity; 'advanced' skill here meant leading other staff. Third, in addition to statewide criteria, AST 2 and 3 included school-based selection criteria which were 'position-specific'; advanced skill here referred to the ability to perform a particular job, such as curriculum coordinator, or staff development coordinator. According to their needs, schools could choose from a range of jobs those to which they would allocate AST 2/3 status, .

Eligibility

Apart from the Northern Territory, and a few minor exceptions, only teachers on the top of the salary scale were eligible to apply for AST-1 status. Some states added the requirement of having taught for a number of years at the top of the scale. Western Australia, for example, required applicants in the first year of implementation (1993) to have completed 15 years equivalent service; each year that requirement will be reduced one year until it comes down to nine years. This allowed the system to absorb the backlog of eligible teachers in a financially feasible way. WA also allowed teachers who have served five years as a Key Teacher to apply for AST-1 status. The NT constituted an exception to all this. It required only three years' experience for teachers to be eligible to apply for AST-1 status.

Quotas

Only NSW and Queensland imposed a quota on the number of applicants granted AST-2

status. In the first two years of AST-1 (1992-3) NSW stipulated that positions existed for 30% of the eligible pool. By 1995, under a new enterprise agreement, it increased the quota to 45%. Queensland set a similar set of official quotas equal to 21.25% of all classroom teachers. The teachers union in that state opposed this arrangement for two reasons: 6000 teachers in the private sector were not limited by quotas; and the difficulty of ensuring that all schools were allocated a fair share of positions led to some schools not having any AST teachers, while others had up to 20. An appeal to the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission failed to remove the quota but did result in a higher quota being set.

Success Rate

The success rate for the first round of applicants in Victoria exceeded 93% sending a shudder through the corridors of other state employing authorities. Success rates in the ACT, WA, and Tasmania turned out to be similar. This was due partly to the absence of quotas and partly because the selection process was 'soft', which in turn was the result of an expectation that most applicants would be successful. For example, in WA, the policy (Education Circular, September, 1992, p. 637) states:

> It is important to understand that the intention of the ST (AST) category is not to recommend only those teachers who are outstanding or very good. The intention is to reward all teachers who are considered to be suitable, when assessed against the selection criteria. It is also important to appreciate that there is no quota on the number of (ASTs). Potentially, all applicants who meet the selection and eligibility criteria could be appointed.

The Australian Education Union pointed out that the AST was based on the following proposition, among others:

> That experienced teachers should be able to illustrate a range of skills against known criteria to an appropriate body of their peers for the purpose of classification as AST, such validation to be achieved by self documentation. In that sense, progress to AST would be 'automatic' rather than dependent upon undertaking a range of extra duties or an inspectorial visit.

Lee (1994) demonstrates that a political and industrial climate was created by union leaders that teachers deserved the AST 1 as recognition for what they were already doing and as a catch up for the salary slide during the 1980s. In contrast, according to Lee, the Commonwealth Government always envisaged that ASTs would be an elite group of teachers in terms of classroom practice and skills. For this reason it had offered additional funding for the AST building up over time to a limit of 30%.

The '90% success rate' quickly led to a widespread perception that AST-1 was not a

genuine and deserved career step but simply a guaranteed and automatic pay rise. "AST: Automatically Selected Teacher" was the title of an article in a journal for principal's at the time (Stevenson, 1991)

SA and the NT also had lower success rates (between 30-40%) but this did not create similar levels of cynicism because only a small proportion (about 11% in SA and 20% in the NT) of eligible teachers applied for AST-1 status. These low application rates reflect the tougher selection process developed in these two states and a culture which interpreted 'advanced skill' as 'exemplary performance in the classroom'. They further suggest that a high degree of self selection took place.

The AST classification was intended to provide all teachers with an incentive to engage in professional development. The implementation of AST-1 dashed this aspiration in a number of ways. In states where AST-1 became virtually automatic, an impression arose that there was no need to make a concerted effort to developed advanced knowledge and skill. In states where the selection process was tough, many teachers calculated that the extra $1200 salary allowance (less after tax) did not compensate for the effort they had to make to get it. In Queensland and NSW, the imposition of quotas made the odds too low for many teachers because they had less than a one in three chance of being successful.

Tenure

Some states (Victoria and ACT) granted AST-1 as a permanent (superannuable) classification. Other states set tenure for a limited period and made it renewable, subject to a satisfactory performance review. NSW set tenure for one year, Queensland five years, NT four years, WA three years.

Selection Panels and Moderation

In all states, applications for AST-1 status were processed by school based selection panels, generally consisting of the principal, an elected staff member (often the union rep) and a representative of the employer (usually a district officer or a principal from another school). Panels in most states received minimal training and this became a major source of concern as time went along. The Queensland Education Department in a submission to the Queensland Industrial Commission pointed to many difficulties in the implementation of AST.

> The reasons for many of the problems with the selection processes are a consequence of the inexperience of selection panels in dealing with the processes

> themselves, the newness of the concept and the need to be reactive to difficulties which generally cannot be predicted in an exercise of this magnitude. (QED, 1992)

In most states the same employer representative was a member of a number of the school-based panels and therefore was expected provide some comparability across schools. In the NT and SA, separate moderators were appointed. In the NT, regional moderators briefed their panels on the procedures and were on call to help panels and applicants during the selection process, but they were not members of the panels. SA was the only state to develop a comprehensive state-wide moderation procedure. Only then did it implement AST-1. Ten moderators were specially selected and trained. Each panel consisted of the Principal, a trained representative elected by school staff and a moderator. According to Lee (1994), there were only 2223 applicants in SA, "a surprisingly small number, and only 806 successful, and 1090 withdrawals. . . . The moderator's involvement in the process was crucial in achieving this result." (p. 20)

Selection Process

The ACT, Victoria, Tasmania and WA took a minimalist approach to the selection process for AST-1. Their evaluation procedures were widely perceived to lack credibility. Their school-based selection panels were generalist, poorly trained and fixed, and were not tailored to the subject or age-grade expertise of the applicants. In most cases, the panels made their determination for each applicant based only on the written application and referees reports. They interviewed less than 25% of the applicants and then only for the purposes of clarifying or amplifying the contents of the application.

The panel method of selection seemed to be chosen because that was the standard method for selecting staff for new positions in the public service generally. There was no experience of performance or portfolio assessments.

For most states, the only sources of evidence on which panels could base their judgements were (i) a self-report by the teacher-applicant indicating how they believed they met each criterion, (ii) reports from referees nominated by the applicant, and (iii) interviews, which usually took about half an hour. Classroom or other forms of performance data could not be required by selection panels.

In SA, and the NT, a more rigorous selection process was adopted for AST-1. In the NT, members of the panel meet with the applicants on a regular basis for a period of up to ten weeks in order to verify claims and write a ten page report on the applicant. At the

end, the report is confirmed with the applicant and reviewed by the moderator. In SA, applicants are observed for a minimum of four lessons by a critical friend on the panel or the chairperson of the panel. On the final assessment day they are observed again by the panel. They also have to give a 45 minute presentation covering the criteria areas and undergo a 45 minute discussion with the panel.

With the Victorian experience as an example, NSW and Queensland used quota systems, so their selection processes were different. These states (particularly NSW) also decided to make the AST1s designated positions as a means of adjusting staffing profiles in schools that were difficult to staff because they were in isolated regions or low socio-economic areas of cities. These schools received a 'quota' of AST positions they could fill according to criteria such as the number of inexperienced staff. The aim of the policy was to entice more experienced teachers to move to these schools from their current positions in more affluent suburbs or coastal regions. As a rule, they did not.

Duties of ASTs

Despite the intention that AST-1 status would be granted in recognition of excellence in teaching, pressure to include extra duties proved to be very powerful. In fact, some schools and teachers providing feedback to employers and unions expressed concern about "the lack specific duties for ASTs".

In all states, AST-1s continue to teach full time but were expected to perform additional non teaching duties. No time allowance is provided for these duties, which are supposed to focus on professional activities, not administrative work. They are supposed to relate to some aspect of curriculum leadership, mentoring junior staff and trainee teachers, and the PD program for the school. The amount of extra work required is negotiated at the school level because there is no industrial agreement concerning teachers' hours of work. Differences within and between schools and states arose in relation to the allocation of extra duties. Some ASTs were asked to perform more than others, some were not required to do any, and some were used to carry out administrative chores for deputy principals. For example, the official AST guidelines in Tasmania listed the following types of non-teaching duties which AST-1s may be allocated:

- responsibility for a small subject department
- co-ordination of resources in a defined curriculum area
- participation in the development of school policy and curriculum, and

- general educational leadership and administrative duties.

In SA, a problem arose because, as an union officer explained:

> We found a couple of important things from an audit of the AST-1 process. One was that most AST-1s were not being asked to do anything in particular in the school than what they had already done and they saw that as being a negative. They claimed that there was no role for them to play, and they expected to be able to play a role. Our answer was, if you can play your role as designed by the criteria, then you're doing a hell of a lot already, so why should you be looking for something else to do? So there was this sense of not having a role to perform plus the sense of not being recognised, and they wanted to be recognised.

In the states that have implemented AST 2 and 3 (only Vic, Tas and NT), they became designated positions tied to specific schools, not further steps in an alternative career path. The number of AST 2 & 3 positions a school could appoint was a function of its size, providing a quota in effect. A large high school might have an allocation of 4-5 AST2s and 2-3 AST3s. In Tasmania, AST2s and 3s were mainly the existing senior responsibility positions renamed. In total, the number of promotion positions available to teachers was no higher than before Award Restructuring.

In its present form, therefore, AST 2 and 3 represent only a slight modification to the previous system of SRPs and much the same job ladder model as existed before. The original intention of using AST as a vehicle to deliver an expertise-based alternative to the traditional pay system governing teachers' work has not been realised. AST 2 and 3 is mainly more pay for more work, with a vengeance. According to a Victorian teacher unionist:

> The death of the AST was the attaching of jobs to it - that killed the whole concept of the developmental model of it - which happened because the employers at the time could not trust that the assessment would be rigorous enough. So we tried to fence in how many other duties got laid on people by insisting that an AST 2s and 3s teach 0.8. But that never worked in practice because school management passed on a lot of the extra work that was put on them because of local school management, because they were the most competent people in the school. Again, we tried to protect the integrity of the AST 2/3 in terms of the teaching function by limiting the kind of extra duties that they could do. But that did not work because of the way schools operated -because the view was that if you got paid for being an AST then you should do these jobs. People who weren't being paid said, "Well, you know, you're the AST".

The pervasive view of ASTs we interviewed in 1994 (Ingvarson & Chadbourne, 1995) was that AST 2 and 3 had turned into a 'con trick'; they had received a small increase in status and salary in return for a major increase in the managerial and administrative functions expected of them. As one AST said, "I don't have any time to get better at teaching now".

THE FATE OF THE AST

This brief survey of the implementation of the AST does not do justice to the scope of the events and issues involved, whether in the industrial commission hearings, the state education departments, the unions or the schools. However, while recognising there are some variations from state to state, the outcome of introducing the AST is almost universally regarded as a disappointment and an opportunity lost.

In most states the AST has lost credibility and been brought into disrepute. An industrial relations officer in a state education department made this representative comment. "Throughout the whole process of negotiating the AST, and the procedures, it was always costs - we were always going back to costs rather than the quality of the product."

Having said that, there is a valuable legacy in the AST experience. There is much greater awareness that the pay system is something that can have significant long-term effects on things that matter to the quality of education, such as teacher self-respect, commitment, professional development, and the building of an accountable professional community. The original concept is almost universally accepted as the right direction and there is now a clearer view of what needs to done the next time an opportunity comes around, if it does. There is more awareness in the profession of the need to take up the responsibility to work on more rigorous forms of standards and evaluation that better reflect the complexity of high quality teaching. Subject associations, for example, are taking their own initiatives in this area (Ingvarson, 1995). However, for the time being, most state governments are turning to school-based management models with job-based career structures that create a separate "executive class" of teacher-managers.

WHAT WENT WRONG?

A comprehensive analysis of the reasons why the AST "failed" in most states, and why employers and unionists have turned their backs on the AST concept for the time being, will take much more research. For the purposes of further debate we suggest a few 'messages from Australia' on the factors that limited the success of the AST in practice.

Putting the cart before the horse: lack of rigorous standards and evaluation procedures

Unlike the US NBPTS, Australia attempted to implement the career development concept before developing validated selection criteria and evaluation processes. There was a total underestimation of the scale of the task that was being entered into - and little patience

from either side with hearing about the complexities and pitfalls. One reason for this rather cavalier attitude seems to have been that Australia had little experience with anything other than traditional Public Service methods, which were based on *selecting* staff for their potential to fulfil future duties, whereas the AST was meant to rely upon *assessment of current performance*. The fact that AST required the development of new forms of performance assessment, scoring rubrics and trained assessors- that self-reports and interviews, especially by colleagues, were among the most invalid methods it was possible to find - was appreciated only after the floods of letters of complaint came in from teachers and principals who were trying to do the right thing. The Principal's Association in one Region wrote, in common with many:

> The process is being viewed with disdain as it is seen not as a test of ability but as a test of how well you can write to the selected criteria. . . .
>
> Threats of ostrasizing panel members have already been raised if popular applicants are not appointed.
>
> Referees are in a quandary as to what to write in relation to selection criteria.
>
> (We) demand a moratorium on the whole process until such time as our concerns are resolved.

The AST concept

While there is almost universal support for the AST concept, the particular form in which it was introduced is generally seen to have had some basic flaws:

1. It was a mistake to introduce three AST levels bunched at the top of the incremental scale. It was hard enough to identify the teaching standards for AST 1 let alone to discriminate between those for AST 1, 2 and 3. In the event, the AST was an add-on to the top of the existing pay scale, not a career restructure. A future career restructure should spread career milestones over the whole of what Huberman (1989) calls a career trajectory so that there are mutually reinforcing intersections between professional development and career stages. AST 1 might come after the first three years of "survival", AST 2 after 6-10 years of "stabilisation", and AST 3 after 10-20 years or so to encourage and reward "experimentation", contributions to collegiality, and so forth.

2. The salary differential for AST 1 was far too small to have a significant impact. After tax, it represented a few extra dollars a week. Each AST stage needs to represent a substantial recognition of the value of a teachers' expanding knowledge and experience if it is to provide a major stimulus to professional development and a sense of achievment. From the bureaucracy's point of view, the effort involved in developing and monitoring the complex and grievance-inducing procedures did not match what in reality had

become a minor salary step

3. The AST was grafted on to an unchanged school management structure. Few saw that the AST concept meant that the relationship between career restructuring and school restructuring had to be thought through, especially as there were assumptions about the new leadership roles that ASTs would play. The implications of the AST concept for the existing school culture should also have been better understood. The AST was imposed on an unchanged set of assumptions about 'how things got done" in schools.

As one union official put it:

> The culture of schools doesn't change very much. Many people still refuse to accept the idea in any form - they reject the concept of rewarding classroom teachers who choose to stay in the classroom. They still see the lock step, work your way to the top, approach as the only genuine career path for teachers and the reformers ignore the reality that most do follow it.

Leading commentators on Award Restructuring still dismiss the AST as "just a pay and conditions matter" when Award Restructuring was centrally about matching the pay system to those organisational features which made schools effective learning communities (Kelly, 1995; Odden, 1995). This attitude was probably one of the major weaknesses in the way the AST concept was translated into practice, resulting by the general industrial climate to deliver pay rises quickly.

Lack of Commitment to Funding the AST

The cost of establishing an additional career path in teaching, as an alternative to the traditional career path in school management, posed a serious obstacle for the proper implementation of the AST. The success of the AST initiative depended on a commitment by state and federal governments to fully fund the new classification and accept that it was not cost neutral exercise. In the short term this meant being prepared to pay for: developing professional standards at each level and in each subject that the AST is awarded; conducting proper evaluation of applicants; rewarding successful applicants with authentic salary allowances. Budgetary constraints and other priorities stopped governments committing themselves to this level of expenditure.

In the long term the AST concept could move towards becoming cost neutral if it reduces high turnover rates among staff, a process which constitutes a massive inefficiency. With fewer teachers to train, substantial saving would be made. With more teachers developing advanced levels of professional knowledge and skill, student outcomes would improve. With stronger guarantees of quality, the taxpayers would probably

support pay increases for ASTs. Put differently, and in terms of corporate culture:

> Conventional measures of industrial productivity are simply inappropriate in schools. The most strategic way to improve the 'productivity of learning' in the 'education industry' is to raise the level of professional knowledge and skill of teachers. (Ingvarson and Chadbourne, 1994, p.36).

Opportunism and suspicion

The AST was used as a vehicle for achieving too many different agendas. Employers believed that unions had developed the AST concept mainly as a means of gaining an automatic pay rise and that they could not be trusted to develop a rigorous teacher assessment system. Unions believed that the employers had reneged on the principles of award restructuring in not coming up with extra money, in using ASTs to solve problems in difficult to staff schools, and in substituting temporary AST allowances for what had previously been permanent (superannuable) senior positions of responsibility in schools in the name of "flexible" school management. In one state, at the last minute of developing the standards, a politician insisted on the inclusion of criteria such as one that required AST 1s to demonstrate "knowledge of, and commitment to the 'Action Plan for Women in the Teaching Service' and a commitment to its implementation."

A bemused Commissioner of the Industrial Relations Commission, in reviewing the AST situation in 1992, said:

> "... do all of you really comprehend over time what this AST category will do? . . . have you really thought through the future of the AST category and what it is supposed to achieve if it is to reward excellence of teaching?"

Ownership and Commitment

The AST reform has the classic features of a failed implementation phase as identified by Fullan (1982). Employing authorities, despite some participation in national negotiations, basically saw the AST as an imposition. Bureaucrats with little commitment to the concept were left to develop procedures for assessing teachers in hundreds of schools in a few months. No one had guardianship of the idea, or the capacity to ensure its integrity. One state department officer said, "We didn't dream the AST up - it came through the Commonwealth and the AEU. By the time it got to us it was all over bar the shouting. No one really asked, "Is this the best way to do it"." A union official said, " the bureaucrats had little knowledge of it. They just asked "What is the minimum we have to do to comply?"

Old mental maps

The original AST concept contained a career development model that differed from the traditional career ladder approach. It advocated rewarding teachers for advances in the quality of their teaching, not for doing more managerial/administrative duties. The task of changing old assumptions about "promotion" and developing an understanding of a concept such as career development or a pay system "based on knowledge and skill proved more difficult than might be expected. It makes little sense to many to give more pay without some promise of extra work. In discussing the concept of career development, one union official said,

> I was just wondering if that's an achievable goal in any time frame - I mean schools are - for all the change that happens to curriculum , etc, - the culture of schools doesn't change very much . I think anyone who has taught in a school, still has a basic understanding of how a school operates, and they could walk back in and find schools very familiar. The majority of schools still have the basic Principal in charge, a couple of henchmen deputies, and everybody else does as they're told.

Time and again in our interviews, no matter whether they were with unionists, bureaucrats, teachers or principals, we found that the word 'promotion' was always used to refer to the traditional career path into administration. Although the rhetoric of AST was "to keep good teachers teaching", and, "to give recognition for those who chose to stay in the classroom", this concept somehow came to have the hollow ring of tokenism than recognition of high quality teaching. These old mental maps seem unlikely to shift significantly until much more work is done to demonstrate the complexity and value of high quality, as opposed to routine, teaching.

The limitations of the industrial relations route to reforming teacher career structures

A question was raised earlier in the paper about whether the industrial arena of Award Restructuring has served teachers' need for a career structure which places more value on quality teaching. At one level the answer must be no. It proved to be very difficult to keep the long term goal clearly in view in the midst of industrial realities and timelines. The AST concept was left too vulnerable to political influence. It needed a stable, neutral context in which to develop and trial all the complex features of a new career path such as standards and performance assessments outside the industrial arena. In the industrial arena everything had to be done on the run. Also, the AST, as part of a career restructure, became confused with a process for determining periodic wage adjustments.

When the AST was planned and introduced there seemed to be no option to proceeding

through the official industrial relations channels. The AST required changes to teachers' pay and conditions and teachers saw unions as the natural and necessary agents for promoting and protecting their interests. Teachers were not prepared to allow these matters to be settled by managerial prerogative or to trust the employers to unilaterally establish a career structure. The employers lacked the political muscle to ignore the union. Without going through the industrial relations arena, then, the AST would not have got off the ground.

The major dimensions of the AST were negotiated through a process of protracted bargaining between teacher employers and teacher unions. While reaching agreement on these matters led to an industrial agreement, it also led to some dilution and distortion of the original AST concept. Traditional conflicts of interest between teacher employers and unions were exacerbated by the prevailing pressures impinging on both parties at the time: an intensification of teachers' work, the devolution of administrative chores to schools, the need to demonstrate increased productivity, and the problem of coping with the competing demands embodied in calls for more school development, teacher development and curriculum development. Since the balance of power between the two sets of parties was fairly even, concessions had to be made on both sides, thus compromising the integrity of a genuine career path in teaching.

In making these observations, we do not wish to reinforce a false dichotomy between the professional and industrial roles of teacher unions. Clearly, much of the industrial action of unions directed at improving the conditions of teachers' work can have a positive impact on their professional performance; eg. increasing DOTT (Duties other than teaching) time and reducing class sizes. Arguably, in relation to the AST, more rather than less industrial action would have helped gain the resources required for a fuller implementation of the career development model: for example, higher salary allowances to give teachers a real incentive for upgrading their knowledge and skill; funds for the research and development of professional standards; money for the provision of PD to help teachers reach these standards; and resources to cover the cost of assessment centres and other mechanisms for the evaluation of applicants.

However, while working through the industrial relations system may have been a necessary condition for developing and launching the AST in Australia, it was not a sufficient condition. The Australian experience showed that setting rigorous professional standards and determining valid procedures for evaluating teachers can not be done properly in the industrial arena through quasi-legal proceedings. These matters must be settled by "professional discussion, research, development, evaluation and

consensus in the light of shared values" (Ingvarson and Chadbourne 1994, p.287). This means finding ways to enlist and bring together the expertise of highly accomplished classroom teachers, professional bodies like subject associations, and academics involved in research on teaching. It means finding a wider arena for developing the kind of policy, long term planning, research, evaluation, trust and commitment necessary to implement the original AST concept.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE IN THE FUTURE?

There is some urgency to reconsider the AST, to go back to the drawing board, and to come up with new conception of a professional career structure for teachers. Shortly after the implementation of AST-1, Labor governments committed to central award restructuring in WA, Victoria and SA were replaced by Liberal governments committed to decentralised enterprise bargaining.

Under new models of local school management, these governments are introducing industrial policies that aim to remove collective bargaining and the award system, and to replace them eventually with individual workplace contracts. In the Victorian "Schools of the Future" program, principals in Victorian state schools now decide, in effect, who gains full entry to the teaching profession, and who shall be recognised as having attained advanced professional standards for promotion. The Victorian program represents a move back to a career ladder approach, designed and implemented by employers using managerial prerogative to the exclusion of the union. As one union put it, "devolution has not been kind to the average teacher."

While recognising the inevitable political context within which new pay systems will be developed, it seems unlikely that there will be a serious chance to move on to an improved version of the AST concept before work is done on the following:

1. The establishment of national professional bodies with responsibility for the development of standards and assessments

The need to distinguish the professional from the industrial

The development of rigorous teaching standards and performance assessments in specific teaching fields, such as those of the NBPTS and the NCTM, is the key to establishing professional career structures. Well formulated teaching standards provide a clearer direction for professional development. A professional career structure will depend eventually on the profession developing its own professional development

system driven by standards, not employer or university priorities. There is an embryonic national professional body in Australia called the Australian Teaching Council which has begun work in this direction, but not to the extent of the NBPTS.

An influential report mentioned earlier *Teachers Learning: Improving Australian Schools Through In-service Teacher Training and Development* (Department of Employment, Education and Training, 1988) emphasised that better in-service education depended on the creation of career milestones marked by teaching standards that defined what teachers should get better at with experience and further education. The same report foresaw a tension in this process that emerged during the introduction of the AST, one which is yet to be resolved. It identified two tasks:

> a *professional* task of selecting, and possibly certifying, highly skilled teachers, and an *industrial* relations task of developing new career structures and assignments for teachers certified as having advanced teaching skills. (p. 2)

Who should have responsibility for these tasks? Are they different but complementary roles for unions and other teacher organisations to play?

Australian teacher unions have long prided themselves, and rightly, for their contribution to 'professional' debates about curriculum, assessment, and equity , for example. However, although they have been powerful politically , especially under Labor governments, they have not been powerful professionally, if the latter is defined to include control over licensing, accreditation and advanced certification. Wise & Leibbrand (1993) identify these functions as the core quality control mechanisms in a profession. Could, or should, the unions bring their industrial role together with these new professional functions? (It is noteworthy that in Australia the doctors 'union', the AMA, plays virtually no formal role in carrying out these functions.)

When the AST reform created the need for criteria and assessment methods to be developed and teachers to be selected, it created new arenas for professional decision-making. Unions automatically assumed they should be centrally involved on behalf of their members in these arenas. In fact, the industrial legislation surrounding the introduction of the AST *required* that the unions and employers develop these selection criteria and processes together and alone. No other organisations were permitted to be party to these deliberations. Neither were there any other teacher organisation at the time, including the subject associations, with the capacity, let alone the authority, to carry it out. Questions arose, however, about the quality of the standards and assessments that could be developed in the context of industrial bargaining and time-lines.

Need to create arenas for professional deliberation on standards and performance assessments that embrace all stakeholders

The AST in Australia provides an interesting contrast with the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards in the US in this respect. Although the larger goals, of lifting the status and quality of teaching, were similar for Board certification and the AST classification, the routes each took to achieve these goals were quite different. Certification by the NBPTS is a personal qualification bestowed on a teacher by a national professional body after a complex performance assessment process. A teacher can take the certificate with them from employer to employer as credible evidence of their knowledge and skill, although employers may not take certification into account. Local employing authorities and collective bargaining units may or may not choose to give recognition to Board Certification in salary negotiations or to use it as a pre-requisite for promotions.

With the AST in Australia there was no choice. Each industrial bargaining unit at state and territory levels had to introduce the AST as a result of national guidelines set down by the Federal Industrial Relations Commission for wage and conditions negotiations at the local level. Although AST was to be a salary classification within a particular employing authority, each industrial bargaining unit had to introduce it as a condition for salary rises. Each also had to develop its own standards and assessment procedures for selecting teachers for AST status, a wasteful duplication of effort.

It is easy to imagine that members of the NBPTS would give their metaphorical right arm if somehow all 15000 US school districts were required to introduce alternate career paths for teachers based on evidence of quality teaching, preferably Board Certification. There is still uncertainty about whether large numbers of local education authorities in the US will give recognition to Board-certified teachers. In order to build the credibility of Board Certification with states and school districts the NBPTS has made a large, long term investment in the development of valid standards and performance assessments for teaching. In contrast, Australia introduced the AST career structure before, or rather without, carrying out the necessary research and development work on valid standards and assessments.

The NBPTS work is based on the idea that standards for teaching should be profession-determined standards. Unions and employers will negotiate the basic career structure, but professional standards, by definition, do not vary from school to school, or system to system, just as medical or engineering standards do not vary from employer to

employer, or workplace to workplace. Employers do not set professional standards, professions do - although employers and the public should, of course, have a voice in their development. A national professional body such as the NBPTS saves expensive duplication of development work across states and school systems.

It seems possible to make a clear and workable distinction here between the industrial-political spheres and the professional. The NBPTS system of external professional assessment provides the kind of credible, expert and independent evaluation that schools could call upon in making defensible high-stakes decisions about career advancement. Certification by a professional body could, for example, be made a pre-requisite for promotion by employers thereby reducing the work of school-based selection panels, but enhancing the validity of their final decisions.

Professional certification also provides a guarantee of some degree of comparability across schools in the meaning of career designations such as 'leading teacher' or 'advanced skills teacher'. It seems to be counter-productive to turn every school into an assessment centre, given the tensions that will occur (and did occur widely with the AST) and possibly negative effects on staff relationships.

2. The idea of the "alternative career path" needs reassessment

The AST concept was conceived as an alternative career path, but the consensus among those involved is that it did not provide one. AST 1 was not enough money and AST 2 & 3 became tied to jobs, jobs with administrative duties that, counter-productively, pressed teachers to neglect their teaching and educational leadership roles. As one of the teachers said in Weppler's (1995) study, "I see AST as a way where people are given responsibility to do things without the time to do it (p.23). AST 2 & 3 salaries did not rise to anything like the Vice-principal levels proposed. For the AST concept to work as intended there was a need for teachers to be able to move in and out of administration type duties without losing greatly in terms of status or salary

In the event, the AST experience in Australia brought into question the viability of the distinction between "job-based pay" and "skill- and knowledge-based pay, if these are to be treated as alternative career paths in schools. If they are, they seem to imply the retention of a divide between teaching and managing that is inconsistent with best practice in school management and the idea of the school as a professional community. In these models, all teachers contribute both educationally and managerially to the educational work of the school through accepting widening responsibilities. The

distinction between job-based pay and skill- and knowledge-based pay seems clear cut, but this paper has described a situation where, for various reasons, it was not easy to sustain in practice, especially in situations where teachers were selected for educational leadership positions on the basis of their professional knowledge and skill.

Some commentators (e.g. Fullan, 1995: 1) are coming to the view that "there is one absolutely necessary . . . condition for reform to work, namely, the substantial broadening of teacher leadership until it embodies the the majority of teachers in a given school, a given state, a given profession." What does this mean for the way career structures are to be conceived? It seems to imply a broadening conception of teachers' work with experience, but not alternate career paths. It is difficult to see how schools can move toward the kind of high-involvement, high quality, professionally accountable organisations they will need to be in the future without incentives for practitioner leadership - career structures which enable those teachers who are vital to the creation of such an organisational culture to remain active practitioners. But the kind of accomplished practitioner implied by Fullan's concept seems wider than that described in the typical NBPTS standards statements. These statements, though excellent, concentrate in the main on individual teaching in particular subject areas. Perhaps there will come a time when the NBPTS needs to think about adding another level of certification which focuses on describing the main dimensions (or standards) for teacher leadership in schools that aim to become fully professional communities. Certainly, any attempts to regenerate the career development concept behind the AST will depend on a clearer conception not only of teaching standards, but the main dimensions describing teacher leadership in communities of accountable professionals.

Although it is popular to talk about the development of schools as learning or professional communities, there may be a need to be wary of this rhetoric when it conveys an impression that schools can be sufficient unto themselves in developing and implementing teaching standards. School objectives and vision statements can not alone provide a valid or sufficient basis for professional teaching standards - no more than a single hospital's mission statement could for medical or nursing standards. Neither can school-based assessment panels provide, in most schools, a sufficient guarantee of expertise and impartiality.

One of the key features of a professional community is a habit of personal and peer review of practice in the light of profession-wide standards that articulate the current consensus and research about quality practice. Profession-wide standards provide a necessary reference point in developing a supportive culture of teacher appraisal and

evaluation within schools wherein teachers may help each other to prepare for certification by an external professional body. Teacher leadership will be essential here in maintaining links between schools and these wider professional standards.

The development of a strong sense of professional community *within* schools depends on the strength of the external professional community *across* schools, manifested in stable professional bodies with functions such as licensing and advanced certification Only one state in Australia has an effective independent teacher licensing authority. In the rest, the state government, the major employers of teachers, controls entry to teaching.) It is difficult to build a strong professional community within a school if those efforts are undermined by weak quality assurance mechanisms at the wider professional level; for example, if a state government allows poorly qualified or inadequately prepared teachers to gain employment.

Similarly, it will also be difficult to build a professional community if the career structure always gives higher status to administrative positions over evidence of quality practice and teacher leadership. Quality assurance mechanisms within a school depend therefore on the strength of quality assurance mechanisms at the national professional level. The future of the AST, and any other career restructure in Australia, will be more assured if the basic tasks of standards setting, performance assessments and certification are provided by teachers' own professional bodies and recognised by employers in promotion decisions.

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[1] In most states and territories there is a single salary schedule. Teachers typically reach the top of this automatic incremental scale in 8-10 years. There are no increments based on gaining further qualifications or 'credits'.

[2] The Australian Schools Commission was an independent advisory body to the fedeal Government.